

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

MEMORANDUM

Unlogged

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~/CODEWORD/NODIS

INFORMATION

NOV 27 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Status of Soviet Submarine Support Facilities at Cienfuegos, Cuba.

The continued presence of a Soviet subtender in Cuban waters, along with the associated facilities remaining at Cienfuegos, gives the Soviets a capability to provide replenishment and limited upkeep for nuclear-powered submarines. This could be accomplished in the protected naval basin in the southern part of the harbor where the mooring buoys, submarine net, and new shore recreation facilities remain in place. Alternatively a tender based at Cienfuegos could rendezvous with submarines at sea and furnish them virtually the same support.

All of the anti-aircraft and field artillery pieces emplaced in the harbor area after the arrival of the Soviet ships in September have now been removed. One of the two coastal surveillance radars installed near the entrance to the bay in September was still there on November 12 (the date of last available photography), but the other may have been removed. There has been considerable construction activity in the Cienfuegos area throughout October and early November, but most of it has been associated with a number of major high-priority projects in an industrial complex north of the city. Work on military projects has been more limited in scope:

- Interior finishing work is being completed on the barracks adjoining the recreation facility on Cayo Alcatraz, an island in the naval basin.
- A small shed is being built near the pier on Cayo Ocampo, where two special barges usually associated with nuclear submarine support are still tied up.
- Road improvement and clearing activity near a probable communications site on a promontory north of the naval basin. (There has been no progress on the communications project itself since mid-September, however, indicating that the project has been delayed or cancelled.)

NSS, Navy reviews completed

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As you know, the subtender and rescue tug which left Cienfuegos in October returned there on November 7 after a two-week visit to the Cuban port of Marielle. The subtender departed Cienfuegos again on Thursday, November 19, entered Casilda, a port southeast of Cienfuegos for a five-day visit, and returned to Cienfuegos on November 24.

The Soviet capability for nuclear submarine support which remains because of the presence of the subtender is limited. The tender can carry out maintenance and minor repair services for submarines, but probably cannot perform major repairs. It also lacks facilities for removing and handling ballistic missiles, and these facilities are not available in Cienfuegos. Because of these limitations, the support capability at Cienfuegos is less than that available to U.S. Polaris submarines at Holy Loch. Its primary value would be in furnishing mid-patrol servicing and recreation facilities to nuclear-powered attack submarines, thus extending the length of time such vessels could remain away from major base facilities in the USSR. If the Soviets want to use the facilities at Cienfuegos to service Y-Class ballistic missile submarines, the "on-station" time of these units could be increased about 25%.

We have no firm evidence as to whether the Soviets intend to proceed with the establishment of a submarine support facility at Cienfuegos, either for themselves or possibly for the Cubans, or whether they will abandon the project. However, until the subtender leaves the area, the Soviets do in fact retain a capability to support nuclear-powered submarines at Cienfuegos.

At the present time there are no known Soviet submarines of any kind in or near the Caribbean.

Nachmanoff/jrr 11/21/70
page 2 rewritten 11/25 to update

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MEMORANDUM

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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ACTION

November 21, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Arnold Nachmanoff 

SUBJECT: Status of Soviet Submarine Support Facilities in Cienfuegos, Cuba

Attached for your signature at Tab A as requested is a memorandum to the President summarizing the status of Soviet submarine support facilities at Cienfuegos. The memorandum points out that as long as the Soviet subtender remains in Cuban waters the Soviets retain a capability to provide support for nuclear-powered submarines at Cienfuegos, and that such support while limited could increase on-station^{time}/of Y-Class ballistic missile submarines by about 25%.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab A.

Attachment:

Tab A - Memo to the President

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